

Rittenhouse Homestead
Lincoln Drive and
Rittenhouse Street
Germantown (Philadelphia)
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-16

HABS

PA

51-GERM,

78-

PHOTOGRAPH

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

APPENDIX
FOLLOWS...

THE RITTENHOUSE HOMESTEAD
Lincoln Drive and Rittenhouse Street
Germantown, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Owners - Commissioners of Fairmount Park, City Hall, Philadelphia.

Date of Erection - 1707

Present Condition - In fair state of preservation, with little departure from original appearance.

Number of Stories - 2½

Materials of Construction - Foundations, stone; floors, wood; exterior walls, stone; interior walls, stone and frame; roof, wood shingles.

Additional Data - Was built by William Rittenhouse, the first of the name in America, who arrived in this country in 1690. He was the first paper maker in the Colonies, and his first mill was located near the house, beside the little stream called by the Indians "Monoshone". Its popular name is "Paper Mill Run". The first mill was washed away in 1701, and was followed by three others in succession; the fourth and last being built in 1780. Scarcely any trace of the mills remains.

William Rittenhouse was an early Mennonite preacher and was Pastor of the Germantown Mennonite Church.

Here was born, April 8, 1732 William's great grandson David. David Rittenhouse was Pennsylvania's first and greatest astronomer. In 1791 he was elected President of the American Philosophical Society, the earliest American learned society, the outgrowth of Benjamin Franklin's "Junto" of 1727, and founded by him in 1743. David served as President until his death in 1796. He was Treasurer of the State from 1777 to 1789 and Director of the Mint from 1792 to 1793. A tablet has been placed on the building.

Reference: "Guide Book to Historic Germantown", by Charles F. Jenkins, published by the Site and Relic Society, (now the Germantown Historical Society), in 1904.

E. Paul Bissell

District Officer.

Addendum to
Rittenhouse House
Lincoln Drive & Rittenhouse Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
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PHOTOGRAPHS

CLAUS RITTENHOUSE HOME
(RITTENHOUSE HOUSE)
207 Lincoln Drive, Fairmount Park
City of Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

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ADDENDUM TO
Rittenhouse House
Lincoln Drive and Rittenhouse Street
City of Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Northeast Area Office
National Park Service
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

CLAUS RITTENHOUSE HOME
(Rittenhouse House)

ADDENDUM TO RITTENHOUSE HOUSE

The new record name reflects the historic name of the structure.

This report is an addendum to a one page report previously transmitted to the Library of Congress in 1972.

Location: 207 Lincoln Drive, Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

USGS Germantown, Pennsylvania Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.483770.4430825

Significance: The building is one of the earliest surviving structures constructed by German-speaking people in the State of Pennsylvania. The building and site also possess exceptional significance as an industrial community and for the association to various members of the Rittenhouse family. The site is an important industrial community whose history spans the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and is the core of an industrial village that once included over forty industrial, agricultural, institutional and domestic structures.

Description: The Claus Rittenhouse Home is a two and one half story masonry structure with steep roof, casement windows, pent eave and other significant architectural features. The casements are set in heavy oak frames that are finished with lambs tongue chamfering on the interior edges, a detail that is repeated on the exposed joists throughout the interior. Evidence suggests that the windows were originally fit with diamond pane quarrels set in lead cames, exceptionally rare features in Pennsylvania and with in Pennsylvania German architectural practice.

(continued)

The structure was initially built as a bank house with the ground floor housing the kuche (kitchen) and the upper floor utilized as the stube (living area) and kammer (sleeping chamber). The kuche is subdivided by a masonry wall to form a cold cellar which contained running spring water for foot storage and preparation. This feature offers valuable insight into the cultural traditions of the builders.

Sometime around 1730, a two and one half story stone addition was erected along one gable, effectively converting the bank house to a continental plan house, the most common building type erected by German-speaking settlers. The continental plan includes the two main ground floor rooms, the kuche and the stube, organized around an internal chimney that served a five-plate iron heating stove. The stove room or stube is located in the addition while the kuche occupies the original portion of the building. Interestingly, the addition retains casement windows on the ground floor while the upper floors are fit with single-hung, Georgian style 9/9 sliding sash windows.

History:

The Claus Rittenhouse Home was constructed in 1707, a date which is supported by considerable circumstantial evidence, most notably a datestone set into the west gable wall. Dating the addition using traditional methods was problematic because no primary or secondary documents specifically referencing the addition have been uncovered. Certain features are characteristic of distinct time periods and assisted in narrowing the dating to a range of 1725-1734.

Sources:

Noble, Timothy M., Noble Preservation Services, Inc. "The 1707 Claus Rittenhouse Home and the c1730 Unidentified Outbuilding, Historic Rittenhouse Town, Historic Structures Report." March 29, 1996.

Historian:

Timothy M. Noble, May 1996.